

CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE- 2 JULY 2026

WRITTEN UPDATES

Agenda Item 8

Application No.: 26/01477/OxSRFI

Site Name: Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

Following the preparation of the committee report, additional comments have been received from consultees and the applicants. These updates seek to address the matters raised.

National Policy Statements

Whilst most planning proposals are considered in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), schemes including Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges submitted for consideration as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP's) are considered in line with the National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) (March 2024). The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2025) and the adopted Cherwell Local Plan are material considerations.

Within the main report of the Relevant Representations, reference has been made to the NNNPS and where relevant the NPPF and Adopted Local Plan Policies.

Local Policy Context (page 53)

The final paragraph dealing with local policy context (immediately before Local Plan Strategy) indicates there is no Neighbourhood Plan in preparation or adopted for the Heyford Park Neighbourhood Plan Parish area.

Whilst this is true, it has been noted that the way in which this sentence is constructed could lead to the conclusion that there are no neighbourhood planning policies in effect in this area.

The adopted (2019) version of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan will continue to form part of the development plan until the updated draft Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan which is due to undergo examination in 2026 has been adopted. As the SRFI application boundary is across both the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan Area and the Heyford Park Neighbourhood Plan Area, once the Heyford Park Neighbourhood Plan is adopted then this too will form part of the development plan.

Emerging Local Plan (page 55)

Following the Regulation 19 consultation which lasted until February 2025, the draft Plan was formally submitted for examination on the 31 July 2025. Whilst initial examination hearings took place in February of this year, the formal examination into the draft Local Plan has yet to commence.

Section 12 – Demand for the Proposed Development (Page 77)

The following paragraphs are proposed as a replacement to the penultimate paragraph commencing 'In principle...' additional reference is proposed as set out below. These changes more closely reflect the Council's current position regarding the proposed development:

In principle, the rail interchange is supported, but it is not considered that the need for the number and scale of logistic units has been fully proven at the current time.

In recognition of paragraphs 2.15, 3.92 of the National Networks National Policy Statement, which indicates that SRFIs need to be supported by connections not just to rail but also logistics terminals connected to the strategic highway network, the Council accepts that logistics units form a key component of an effective interchange facility.

There is no prescribed upper or lower limits in the NNNPS as to the amount of logistics floorspace that must be provided in association with a freight interchange facility. Accordingly, this needs to be justified in the context of each proposal and its requirements and the environmental harms that will arise from the development.

The Council though continues to work with the applicants to explore this aspect of the proposal at the examination.

Accordingly, it is the Council's view, that whilst the principle for a strategic rail interchange is supported in order to reduce the reliance on HGV transport, further justification is required on the scale of the associated logistics development given the environmental harm that will arise.

Applicant's Comments & Role of Requirements:

The applicant has commented on the agenda report. Whilst they welcome the overall support for the scheme, they feel limited scope has been given to the detail of the requirements set out in the draft order. The requirements are one part alongside articles which set out the main legal provisions and a S106 agreement that the control mechanism by which the detailed aspects of the proposal are dealt with should the draft Order be approved. The requirements themselves have a similar role to controlling development as conditions would on a planning application.

In general, the Council welcomes the proposed requirements set out in the DCO. Of note though are the following contained within the DCO:

No. 5: Rail

This requirements seeks to set a threshold on the amount of warehouse development that can be provided before the rail infrastructure is fully operational to the standards required of an NSIP application (a minimum of four 775 metre trains per day).

A threshold is considered necessary to ensure a rail interchange is provided before the majority of the development is completed and occupied. Without the trigger for the delivery of the rail interchange, there is a significant risk that the development would become a highways based logistics facility and not one that delivers the rail benefits sought by the national statement.

Based on the threshold set in requirement 5, the scale of development proposed at (232,258 sqm (2.2 million sq. ft.) of warehouse (including ancillary office floor space but not including mezzanine floor space)) is considered to be substantial out of a total allowance of 603,850 sqm (approx. 6.5 million sq. Ft.) of warehousing plus an additional 201,283 sqm of additional floorspace in the form of mezzanines.

Whilst modelling indicates that the highway network can accommodate this level of development without severe harm occurring, the scale of development proposed without the provision of a rail interchange to integrate with would be significant and therefore the scheme would not meet its designed role as an SRFI.

It should be noted that as unlike a planning application, a Development Consent Order application needs to be built out in accordance with the requirements. The Council would therefore wish to further explore the point at which the trigger point for the delivery of the rail infrastructure is set and the mechanisms for completion of the scheme should development stall.

No. 13: Earthworks

In addition to the requirements for details of how materials will be excavated and stored on site, the Council would also wish to see detailed routing plans for the transportation of materials onto and off the site within the DCO. It is noted part (e) seeks to secure details of the type of the materials to be moved but it is unclear if this just covers the quantity and type of material to be moved as opposed to the routes to be taken. This can be secured through a routing plan.

15. Central Hub

In addition to details for the proposed amendments to the listed threshing barn, the Council would also seek to secure details on the relationship of the building and its setting in relation to the neighbouring buildings and proposed changes to land levels and boundary treatments.

25. Construction Hours

The normal hours of work are set as being between 07:00 and 19:00 hours on weekdays and 07:00 and 16:00 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays nor on

public holidays, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Larger works including piling and ground reprofiling are further restricted to shorter worker times. These arrangements are deemed acceptable.

There are though some exceptions e.g. for highway works or emergency works and whilst most of these are acceptable, there are three exceptions contained within the DCO of note:

(b) are carried out within existing buildings or buildings constructed as part of the authorised development;

(f) seeks to allow works to complete an operation that would otherwise cause greater interference with the environment and the general public if left unfinished

(h) aims to allow works which do not give rise to noise or vibration which cause an adverse impact at the boundary of the main site.

These three exceptions have the potential to allow significant levels of activity of site which, in the view of a construction site manager may be acceptable but may be more widely considered to be a significant nuisance to people surrounding the development. It is therefore proposed that these be removed and should any work be considered necessary out of the prescribed hours, this be agreed in advance with the Council.

32. Community Liaison Group

The provision of a liaison group is welcomed. Whilst the group is specified to operate for at least five years following the completion of the development, the requirement does not specify how often the group should meet nor how any actions will be recorded, undertaken, and reported on.

To make this group effective, it is requested that it meets at least once each quarter and a website be arranged to allow both members and non-members to follow progress of any existing actions or to register new issues as they arise.

Further Comments from Cherwell District Council's Economic Growth Service and Enterprise Oxfordshire

Following the publication of Officer Report and draft Relevant Representation, further comments have been received from Cherwell District Council's Economic Growth Service with support from Enterprise Oxfordshire. The potential for the development to support 5,550 person-years of temporary employment during the construction phase and a further 7,195 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs in the region on completion is welcomed.

However, Oxfordshire traditionally experiences a tight labour market which means the region has low unemployment rates compared to national averages. This sits around 2.7%, compared to the national average of 4.5%.

Whilst this can be interpreted as a good indicator for the region however, it does mask the challenge for business to recruit and retain labour within a competitive labour market.

It would therefore be essential to address at the earliest opportunity the risk of the development being constrained operationally by a shortage of employees and skills. Logistics education and training should essentially be incorporated into this development and be in place well before operations are able to begin, potentially with further education provision integrated within this development. This should be secured through the DCO.

Recommendation:

The additional comments do not affect the overall principle of the Council's position in relation to this development which is supportive in principle. However, as expressed in the main report, the Council continues to recognise that there are several areas of concern arising from the proposed development and whether these can be adequately mitigated. The points of detail raised in this update report seek to provide further commentary on these areas of detail.

Therefore, following consideration of the additional information, it is recommended that the proposed submission be amended as set out in this report.

Agenda Item 9

Application Numbers - 24/03392/M106 AND 25/00366/DOV_5

Site Name – Himley Village North West Bicester Middleton Stoney Road Bicester

Section 3 – FINANCIAL VIABILITY APPRAISAL

Additional Paragraphs:

- 3.16 For completeness, it should be noted that CDC's viability consultant (Highgate) produced a further FVA Addendum in March 2026 which considered the areas of difference highlighted by the Applicants and their sensitivity test based upon their submitted 10% Affordable Housing (AH) scheme. Highgate also undertook their own analysis of the viability of the Applicant's refined mix proposed for 10% AH provision to assess whether the proposal to deliver 10% AH across the site (subject to mid and late stage VRMs) was justified.
- 3.17 Based upon the Applicant's refined mix for a 10% AH scheme, a RLV of +£32.82 million (just below the BLV of £33.45 million) was produced and hence, a relatively small viability gap/deficit of approximately £0.63 million. Table 4.1 of the Addendum summarises this position:

Scenario	Residual Land Value (RLV)	Benchmark Land Value (BLV)	Viability Gap (£) (Difference between BLV and RLV)
Applicant/Rapleys' Updated 10% Affordable Housing Mix <i>– 10% affordable housing (approximately 70.59% Affordable Rented and 29.41% Shared Ownership; 'TZC' costs in line with MGAC's Cost Plan (and the Applicant's interpretation of the Energy Strategy); and Section 106 contributions in line with those provided by CDC of £49.53 million) plus a further assumed contribution of £9,334,310 for the Strategic Link Road (SLR).</i>	+£32.82 million	£33.45 million	-£0.63 million

Source: Highgate Updated Viability Analysis (March 2026)

- 3.18 This is a smaller deficit than the viability gap of approximately -£3.26 million found by the Applicant but suggests that when viability testing is undertaken based upon a more refined development mix for 10% affordable housing provision (using the Applicant's Illustrative Layout) the surplus of +£5.5 million in Highgate earlier strategic Sensitivity Test 3 is reduced to a small deficit.
- 3.19 Our consultant also pointed out that there were a number of other factors raised by the Applicant which had not been factored into the FVA and which were likely to worsen the viability of the development (i.e. increase the revised viability gap identified in Highgate's Addendum of £0.63 million). These were: sales values; changes to the assumed phasing/cash flow; and the Building Safety Levy.

Section 5 – APPRAISAL

Addition to paragraph:

5.16 The analysis in the final independent FVA addendum for CDC provides further evidence to support the acceptance of 10% AH with a review mechanism.

Agenda Items 10 and 11

Applications Nos. 24/01909/F & 24/01910/LB

Amended Plans Received

In response to officers' outstanding concerns, amended plans have been received along with a set of demolition plans which highlights historical features to be removed, doorways to be retained and further clarity of the proposed plans. The applicant has provided the following commentary to set out what changes have been made:

Drawing	Updates
150B	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted
151B	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted, including the new stair
152B	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted including the new stair
153C	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted including the removal of the larger mezzanine
160C	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted
161A	Extent of demolition clarified relative to the revised proposals with the red dashed lines noted and the cross section hatched
201D	No change to the scheme from that previously submitted
202E	No change to the scheme from that previously submitted
203E	Layout to lobby to F05 updated, door to F06 shown retained
204G	Layout to lobby to F08 updated, door to F09 shown retained, headroom shown to retained mezzanine, the existing wall being retained and layout of the apartment has been handed
210B	No change to scheme
211C	Cross section shown hatched
212D	Lower ground floor doors updated to reflect the proposed floor plan

A briefing note has also been sent to the Leader of the Council, Cllr McLean, on behalf of the applicant, with regard to these applications. It raises no new information requiring officer commentary or response.

Officer Response

The demolition plans have been submitted further to the Conservation Officer's comments on the applications. We have sought the Conservation Officer's comments on the demolition plans and at the time of writing these are awaited. If received by the time of the planning committee they will be reported verbally to committee members.

Recommendation

In light of the amended plans received, Condition 2 needs to be amended to read as follows:

Condition 2 of 24/01909/F

Except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the form and following approved plans “21020 (D) 201 Revision D”, “21020 (D) 202 Revision E”, “21020 (D) 203 Revision E”, “21020 (D) 204 Revision G”, “21020 (D) 210 Revision B”, “21020 (D) 211 Revision C” and “21020 (D) 212 Revision D”

Reason – For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Condition 2 of 24/01910/LB

Except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this consent, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the form and following approved plans “21020 (D) 201 Revision D”, “21020 (D) 202 Revision E”, “21020 (D) 203 Revision E”, “21020 (D) 204 Revision G”, “21020 (D) 210 Revision B”, “21020 (D) 211 Revision C” and “21020 (D) 211 Revision D”

Reason – For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The overall recommendations remain as it is set out in the case officer reports.

Agenda Item 12

Application No.: 26/00228/CDC Site Name: 39 Sheep Street

Following the preparation of the committee report, additional documents have been received from the applicant. These updates seek to address the matters raised by the Council’s Recreation and Leisure Team and the Council’s Urban Designer.

Technical Data Sheet – Graffiti & Flyposting Protection System

Use of matt and gloss finish that would prevent permanent marking by graffiti.

Maintenance Scheme

All planters would be maintained by the Cherwell District Council.

Artist brief and decommissioning statement

The artwork is intended to remain *in situ* for anticipated period of 10 years.

The artwork would be subject to periodic review every two years that would assess the physical condition, ongoing safety, and continued relevance.

All costs including the deinstallation, removal, storage and relocation shall be the responsibility of the Cherwell District Council.

The final design is yet to be confirmed however; a fox character would be the central motif.

Recommendation:

The additional comments received do not raise any additional planning material considerations which have not already been addressed within the case officer's report.

The recommendation remains as it is set out in the case officer report.